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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to survey the status of forensics in the United States. A mailing list was developed to include every school that might have forensic activities. Established mailing lists prepared for tournaments, publications of tournament results, and lists set up for sale were consulted; schools were asked to list other schools in their state that might have a forensics program; and some membership lists of regional forensic associations were examined. After duplications were eliminated, a list of 925 institutions of higher education remained. A questionnaire was prepared that was of a restricted, relatively forced-choice format. Two mailings about a month apart took place. Of the 925 questionnaires sent out, 467 replies were received. Some of the results indicated that: the majority of forensics programs are directed by full-time faculty members; almost half of the programs are independent of the speech-communication curriculum; most programs rely on student volunteers to build the forensics program; improvement in critical thinking, analysis of issues, and analysis of arguments are the goals of most programs; and tournaments, meets, and festivals are prominent characteristics of forensics programs. (WR)

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FORENSICS IN THE UNITED STATES - 1973

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To survey the status of forensics in the United States requires first the discovery of those colleges and universities which have programs. Two approaches are possible here, first only those institutions known to have established programs could be included, or second, a mailing list could be built to include the name of every school that might possibly have forensic activities. For this study the latter method was chosen. Although this necessarily means that some will receive a survey who do not have a program, it will also mean that schools will be included that might otherwise have been left out.

Established mailing lists prepared for tournaments, publications of tournament results, and lists set up for sale were consulted. At least one school (and often more than that) in each state known to operate a major tournament was asked to send their tournament mailing list. In addition, they were asked to list the names of schools in their state or locality thought to have a forensics program even though they were not included in the tournament mailing list. Finally, some membership lists for regional forensic associations were examined. After duplications were eliminated, a final list of 925 institutions of higher education remained.

To prepare the questionnaire books and articles on forensics were consulted as well as practicing directors of forensics and questionnaires used in other surveys. Again a value judgment had to be made. Either an extensive and open-ended instrument could be used to obtain the greatest amount of information, or a restricted, relatively forced-choice instrument could be used to increase the likelihood of completion by the greatest number of respondents. After consideration of the number of questionnaires received each year by directors of forensics alongside their hectic schedule, it was decided to use the latter approach. A questionnaire was prepared with these criteria in mind: (1) it must be constructed so that most of the responses could be made by a simple check mark; (2) it must pose questions that do not require extensive research to find the answers; (3) it must be comprehensive enough to permit the emergence of variations in programs; (4)

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it must be limited to what can be asked on two sides of a legal length sheet of paper; (5) it must serve to gather the greatest amount of information about forensics programs within these limitations.

Two mailings, about a month apart, in June and July, 1973 took place. Because the specific identity of respondents was not requested, it was impossible to know precisely who had replied and who had not. However, by examining postmarks and letterheads where available, it was possible to reduce the second mailing by about 200 schools. Again the error of over-coverage rather than under-coverage was selected.

Of 925 questionnaires sent out, a total of 467 replies was received. This is a response of 50.5%, and is considered adequate to warrant inferences about the population. When it is recalled that the original mailing list was extended to include many schools only suspected of having forensics programs, the return is even more impressive. Of the returns, 449 described their programs, 16 reported no program at that institution, and 2 arrived too late to be included in the analysis. Of the 449 descriptions of programs, 357 came from four-year institutions, and 92 were from two year schools. The returns were rather well distributed among the 48 continental United States (we have evidence of response from all states except Alaska and Hawaii), with the greatest number of replies from California, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Illinois in that order. Other states with more than 10 schools represented are (in alphabetical order) Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Again, more specific analysis of the replies by school and state is not possible because of the decision not to reveal identities of respondents.

The returned questionnaires were examined for correct procedure, the narrative material such as descriptions of program philosophy and marginal comments were noted, and quantitative data were transferred to computer punch cards. The narrative material was examined critically. The quantitative data were analyzed by Univac 1100 Statistical Package for the Social Sciences at the University of Utah Computer Center.

The data reveal a picture of forensics programs throughout the country that in large

measure are very much alike. There are some distinct differences, however, between schools which emphasize debate and those which put primary emphasis upon other speech events. It would appear that this difference also correlates with the difference between four-year schools and two-year schools, but not entirely so. Overall, 49.9% of the entire 449 institutions responding indicate that their program is debate oriented with some attention to other events, or is concerned with debate alone. Two-year schools on the other hand, say that only 19.3% of them have this concentration on debate. On the contrary, 48% of the 92 two-year schools responding say their program is equally balanced among various events, and 22% of them deal in individual events only. When two-year and four-year schools are combined, only 8.7% work with individual events alone. Most schools (87.8%) describe their program as competitive and inter-collegiate. Intramural activities, either competitive or otherwise, constitute a small part (5.3%) of American forensic programs. Almost half of the forensics programs in the country (45.7) are generally independent of the speech-communication curriculum, and two-thirds (65%) report that awarding of academic credit for forensics is about the extent of their involvement in speech-communication. In only 14.5% of all schools reporting are speech-communication majors or minors required to participate in some forensics, and in only 19.6% of the institutions are students in speech-communication classes sent to forensics as a laboratory experience. It would seem that forensics programs generally must be described as extra-curricular rather than co-curricular.

Virtually all forensics programs (93.1%) are directed by full-time faculty members. In 17.6% of the programs, graduate students are hired to assist the director, but this, obviously is limited to graduate degree granting institutions for the most part. Only 1.1% of the two-year schools report the use of graduate assistants; 3.1% of the programs are essentially student directed. Of the directors of forensics, 68.2% believe or suspect that they will work in the field for the next five years, and 26.5% of them have published a book or scholarly article on the subject. In preparation for their present duties, 85.1% studied argumentation, debate, or directing forensics in

school, and 69.7% actively debated. However, only 42.5% consider argument, debate, or forensics to be their primary subject, and only 58.6% receive released time for this work.

Most programs (69%) rely on volunteers among students to build a forensics group, although 47.4% of the directors make contact with high school programs to attract their graduates, and 26.5% of the schools offer forensics scholarships. In 54.1% of the schools, other faculty members recommend forensics to their students, and in 28.7% of the university admission office polls incoming students to discover those interested in forensics. 80% of the programs permit all students with interest to participate to the extent they wish, and only 10% limit participation through tryouts. Most programs (41.2%) have from 7 to 15 students participating actively, although 27.4% of them have as many as 25 students and 6.2% claim over 35 with one or two indicating more than one hundred participants. Table #1 summarizes estimates of participation for the year 1972-73. Table #2 summarizes the distribution of students by class, and shows generally an even spread, with the obvious emphasis upon freshmen and sophomores in the two-year colleges. Of interest from an affirmative action viewpoint is participation and trends among women and minorities. Table #3 indicates many programs involve one-quarter to one-half women students, and in 31% of the schools this is a greater proportion than three years ago. Minority students constitute 25% or less of the total student involvement, as also shown in Table 3, and in only 22% of the institutions is this higher than three years ago. Perhaps there is need for improvement in minority participation.

In almost all programs student activity is determined by some form of student-teacher consultation. In 19.4% of all programs students typically engage in only one activity during the year, but this is true in only 8.7% of the two-year schools. In 36.1% of the programs, students typically engage in debate and one other activity during the year, and it is more common for students to engage only in individual events in two-year than four-year schools (53.3% and 34.3%). Almost half the students (41.8%) tend to engage in about the same activities year after year, and only 18.5% of the programs report that during two or more years of participation students engage in a

structured sequence of events designed to yield specified educational goals. Some question of pedagogical theory must be raised by this. Operation of forensics programs involves regular practice debates in 81.3% of the programs, regular small group conferences between faculty and students concerned with a specific event in 78.8%, and in 58.4% of the programs there are regular lectures by the staff on debate theory, speech writing theory, interpretation, etc. About half the programs use upperclass students to instruct younger ones (49%), and about the same number (46.8%) purchase handbooks for individual study. Other methods used include student observation of model performances (49.7%), examination of sample cases or speeches (37.6%), and reference to outside subject matter experts (30.7%).

Analysis of replies on education goals of forensics programs reveals that *improvement in critical thinking, analysis of issues,* and *analysis of arguments* to be most sought after as they are rated very important by 80.4%, ~~and~~ 72.6% (BM 72.4%) of the respondents respectively. *Improvement in decision-making ability* is the only other goal rated very important by more than half the programs (52.1%). Other goals rated very important by more than 45% of the respondents were *research ability* (49.4%), *ability to present and defend a case* (47.2%), *improved organizational ability* (46.8%), and an *improved sense of ethical responsibility* (45.7%). Interestingly, only 39.2% rate *improved public speaking ability* as very important to their program's educational goals, and only 26.3% consider *improvement in interpersonal communication* to be very important.

It may be significant that an effort to determine the perception of forensic directors of the goals set for their programs by administrators in their department or college was not very successful. As Table #4 reveals, no clear pattern of objectives emerges with the possible exception that half (57.2%) feel their administrators want forensics to contribute to a well-rounded education, and directors in two-year schools are reasonably certain they are not expected to attract graduate students. Almost a quarter of the respondents could not or would not respond to this question, and several wrote on the questionnaire that they did not understand the point. This may be addi-

tional evidence that forensics programs operate in a semi-autonomous status with relatively little integration with the educational effort of their department or college. Only 61.5% of the directors believe their chairman and other members of the department are informed and supportive, and half (50.6%) think that most students outside the program are uninformed and uninterested in forensics. A quarter of the directors believe their chairman is supportive but that few faculty members are interested in forensics (25.8%), and 16% believe that many faculty members are suspicious of forensics and call it sophistic or a game. However, 39.4% say that faculty members in several departments follow and support the forensics program, 42.1% say their school paper gives excellent coverage of their activities, 29.2% are frequently invited by civic organizations to present debates, and 20.3% of the directors think community leaders are informed and proud of what is done in the forensics program.

Tournaments, meets, and festivals are prominent characteristics of forensics programs, and 49% of the schools sponsor such an event for college students, and 51.4% do so for high school participants. Debate tournaments, which may or may not include some individual events contests as well, are the most common type of activity, although 12.7% of the respondents say their school attends no debate tournaments. From 11 to 26 tournaments per year seems most typical throughout the country, half the schools (50.3%) say they attend no more than 11 debate tournaments per year, and 90.2% say they attend no more than 26. Of the 449 schools reporting, 7 say they attend more than 40 debate tournaments a year. Half the schools (52.3%) attend no tournaments that feature only individual events, and 26.5% attend no more than 4 such events per year; 11.8% of the schools attend from 5 to 7 individual events tournaments, and six schools report they attend from 15 to 20 per year. Legislative assemblies are attended by 12.9% of the schools, and most of them (8.7%) attend only one per year. Interpretation festivals are attended by 33.2% of the schools, and most of them (26.5%) attend one or two per year. 10.5% attend about one or two discussion conferences each year; 10.9% engage in about the same number of radio/television competitions; 9.4% participate in one or two drama festivals, and 32.1% participate in from one to

four oratorical contests, with some schools reporting as many as 20 oratorical contests each year.

Another vehicle of student forensics participation is public debating, speaking, reading, etc. Public debating is used in 54.6% of the programs, and most of them (43.9%) present from one to six per year, but four schools say they give more than 40 public debates in a year. On television 25.1% of the schools present debates, usually no more than three per year, and 9.4% give about the same number over the radio. Public interpretation programs are given by 31.2% of the schools, and typically they present no more than four per year, although 2.2% say they have more than ten per year.

Finally, the means of financing forensics programs was investigated, but the results are too irregular to be reliable. It can safely be concluded that forensic programs in the United States are financed by funds from academic budgets, student activity fees, or some combination of the two. Only 4.7% report alumni support, and 2.9% receive some community funding. As to the actual size of the budgets, no safe conclusion can be reached. Table #5 reports the data received, but it must be emphasized that 51.2% of the schools (32.6% of the two-year schools) refused to state the size of their budget. Since one can only guess as to the pattern of refusal, no inferences should be made. It may have been that those perceiving their budgets as too small were ashamed to report them, or perhaps those with particularly large budgets would prefer to keep that fact a secret. Or there may be no pattern to the failures to report.

In conclusion it can be said that directors of forensics in the United States are particularly cooperative in responding to this questionnaire with the one exception of budgets. Because of this, the data collected here probably give an accurate pictures of forensics in this country.

TABLE 1

EXTENT OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION

How many students actually participate for the entire year?

	All Schools		Two-Year Schools	
No Report	(256)	57.0%	(57)	62.0%
1 - 6	(31)	6.9%	(7)	7.6%
7 - 15	(78)	17.4%	(14)	15.2%
16 - 25	(55)	12.2%	(9)	9.8%
26 - 35	(15)	3.4%	(2)	2.1%
36 - over	(14)	3.1%	(3)	3.3%
Totals	449	100.0%	92	100.0%

How many students participate at one time or another?

	All Schools		Two-Year Schools	
No Report	(230)	51.2%	(49)	53.3%
1 - 6	(13)	2.9%	(16)	17.4%
7 - 15	(51)	11.4%	(12)	13.0%
16 - 25	(74)	16.5%	(5)	5.4%
26 - 35	(38)	8.4%	(10)	10.9%
36 - over	(43)	9.6%		
Totals	449	100.0%	92	100.0%

TABLE 2

DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS BY CLASS

What Per Cent of Students Are Freshmen?

Percent:	All Schools		Two-Year Schools	
0 - 25%	(200)*	44.5%	(21)	22.8%
26 - 50%	(211)	47.0%	(55)	59.8%
51 - 75%	(32)	7.2%	(12)	13.1%
76 - 95%	(6)	1.3%	(4)	4.3%
Totals	449	100.0%	92	100.0%

What Per Cent Are Sophomores?

Percent:				
0 - 25%	(231)	51.4%	(14)	15.2%
26 - 50%	(182)	40.6%	(46)	50.0%
51 - 75%	(25)	5.6%	(22)	23.9%
76 - 100	(11)	2.4%	(10)	10.9%
Totals:	449	100.0%	92	100.0%

What Per Cent Are Juniors?

Percent:				
0 - 25%	(349)	77.7%	(92)	100.0%
26 - 50%	(91)	20.3%		
51 - 75%	(5)	1.1%		
76 - 83%	(4)	.9%		
Totals:	449	100.0%		

What Per Cent Are Seniors?

Percent:				
0 - 25%	(399)	88.9%	(92)	100.0%
26 - 50%	(48)	10.7%		
51 - 71%	(1)	.2%		
76 - 90%	(1)	1.2%		
Totals:	449	100.0		

* Number in parentheses represents responses by category.

TABLE 3

WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN FORENSICS

What Per Cent of Participants Are Women?

	All Schools		Two Year Schools	
Percent:				
0 - 25% -	(193)	43.0%	(39)	42.4%
26 - 50% -	(186)	41.4%	(34)	36.9%
51 - 75% -	(62)	13.8%	(16)	17.4%
76 - 100 -	(8)	1.8%	(3)	3.3%
Totals	449	100.0%		
Trend of Women Participants in Past Three Years:				
More	(139)	31.0%	(34)	37.0%
Fewer	(47)	10.5%	(5)	5.4%
Same	(230)	51.2%	(46)	50.0%
Ttls*	416	92.7%	92	92.4%

* Not all schools responded of those returning the questionnaire

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What Per Cent of Participants Are Black, Chicano, or Indian?

	All Schools		Two Year Schools	
Percent:				
0 - 25% -	(435)	96.9%	(83)	90.2%
26 - 50% -	(5)	1.1%	(3)	3.3%
51 - 75% -	(4)	.9%	(4)	4.3%
76 - 100 -	(5)	1.1%	(2)	2.2%
Totals	449	100.0%	92	100.0%
Trend of Black, Chicano, and Indian Participants in Past Three Years.				
More	(100)	22.0%	(18)	19.6%
Fewer	(31)	6.9%	(9)	9.8%
Same	(262)	58.4%	(50)	54.3%
Ttls	393*	87.3%	77	83.7%

TABLE 4

EDUCATIONAL GOALS OF FORENSICS PROGRAMS

	Very Important	Important	Of Some Importance	Not an Objective	No Response	Totals
Public Speaking	(176)39.2%	(185)41.2%	(58)12.9%	(4) .9%	(26)5.8%	(449)100%
Analysis of Arguments	(325)72.4%	(78)17.4%	(12) 2.7%	(5)1.1%	(29)6.5%	" "
Analysis of Issues	(326)72.6%	(81)18.0%	(10) 2.2%	(4) .9%	(28)6.2%	" "
Critical Thinking	(361)80.4%	(55)12.2%	(6) 1.3%	(0)0.0%	(27)6.0%	" "
Decision-Making	(234)52.1%	(123)27.4%	(51)11.4%	(10)2.2%	(31)6.9%	" "
Professional Attitude	(94)20.9%	(135)30.1%	(128)28.5%	(58)12.9%	(34)7.6%	" "
Research Ability	(222)49.4%	(160)35.6%	(35) 7.8%	(3) .7%	(29)6.5%	" "
Communication	(118)26.3%	(158)35.2%	(104)23.2%	(40) 8.9%	(29)6.5%	" "
Organization	(210)46.8%	(164)36.5%	(35) 7.8%	(10) 2.2%	(30)6.7%	" "
Ethical Responsibility	(205)45.7%	(149)33.2%	(44) 9.8%	(19) 4.2%	(31)6.9%	" "
Sophistication	(38) 8.5%	(123)27.4%	(169)37.6%	(85)18.9%	(34)7.6%	" "
Defend a Case	(212)47.2%	(155)34.5%	(32) 7.1%	(13) 2.9%	(37)8.2%	" "
Integrate Studies	(140)31.2%	(176)39.2%	(77)17.1%	(16) 3.6%	(40)8.9%	" "

UNIVERSITY/DEPARTMENT GOALS FOR FORENSICS

Attract Undergraduates	(135)30.1%	(90)20.0%	(76)16.9%	(73)16.3%	(75)16.7%	(449)100%
Attract Grad Students	(29) 6.5%	(37) 8.2%	(36) 8.0%	(227)50.6%	(119)26.5%	" "
Increase Prestige	(89)19.8%	(118)26.3%	(116)25.8%	(53)11.8%	(73)16.3%	" "
Support Speech Comm.	(124)27.6%	(151)33.6%	(75)16.7%	(33) 7.3%	(66)14.7%	" "
Attract Contributions	(9) 2.0%	(17) 3.8%	(62)13.8%	(274)61.0%	(87)19.4%	" "
Well-rounded Education	(257)57.2%	(97)21.6%	(33) 7.3%	(7) 1.6%	(55)12.2%	" "
Campus-Town Relations	(47)10.5%	(140)31.2%	(125)27.8%	(67)14.9%	(70)15.6%	" "
Student Activity	(129)28.7%	(139)31.0%	(84)18.7%	(36) 8.0%	(61)13.6%	" "
Laboratory for Classes	(86)19.2%	(123)27.4%	(91)20.3%	(74)16.5%	(75)16.7%	" "
Integrate Studies	(88)19.6%	(140)31.2%	(100)22.3%	(49)10.9%	(72)16.0%	" "
Teacher Preparation	(76)16.9%	(104)23.2%	(105)23.4%	(88)19.6%	(76)16.9%	" "

TABLE 5

FORENSICS BUDGETS*

All Schools

	230 - Not Reporting	51.2%
$ 0 - $	500 - (6)	1.4%
600 -	1,000 - (27)	5.9%
1,100 -	1,500 - (31)	6.8%
1,600 -	2,000 - (37)	8.2%
2,100 -	2,500 - (37)	8.2%
2,600 -	3,000 - (19)	4.2%
3,100 -	3,500 - (19)	4.2%
3,600 -	4,100 - (11)	2.3%
4,200 -	5,500 - (18)	4.0%
5,600 -	8,000 - (8)	1.7%
9,900 -	+ - (6)	1.3%
	Total 449	

Two Year Schools

	No Report (30)	32.6%
$ 1 - $	500 - (3)	3.3%
600 -	1,000 - (7)	7.6%
1,100 -	1,500 - (7)	7.6%
1,600 -	2,000 - (7)	7.6%
2,100 -	2,500 - (5)	5.4%
2,600 -	3,000 - (8)	8.7%
3,100 -	3,500 - (2)	2.2%
3,600 -	4,100 - (4)	4.3%
4,200 -	5,500 - (10)	10.9%
5,600 -	8,000 - (6)	6.5%
9,900 -	+ - (3)	3.3%
	Total 92	100.0%

* Notice the large number not responding to this item.